United States Environmental Protection Agency New England Region Office of External Programs JFK Federal Building Boston, MA 02203

Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire Rhode Island

PEPA Environmental No

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Coordinating Council Mulls Supplemental Environmental Projects, Prepares for Public Comment Period

BOSTON -- A day after reaching a tentative agreement on a key component of the proposed remedy for the Pine Street Superfund Site, the Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council explored a series of supplemental projects that could be undertaken by the potentially responsible parties (PRPs) as part of a larger plan to improve environmental conditions in and around Burlington.

"We've turned a \$50 million Rube Goldberg contraption into an effective, affordable mechanism for environmental protection. And importantly, we've created an opportunity for urban development in a county where green space is being gobbled up at a record pace," said John P. DeVillars, administrator of the EPA's New England office.

DeVillars encouraged the Council to explore other side projects that would benefit the local environment beyond the site itself as part of an overall settlement regarding past pollution in the Barge Canal. He suggested the consideration of natural resource improvements of the Englesby Brook Watershed and a technical assistance program for small businesses in the Burlington area to reduce their use of toxics.

"In return for a more affordable cleanup we should explore other environmental benefits as part of this settlement," DeVillars said.

Senator Patrick Leahy, who requested that the EPA withdraw its earlier cleanup plan and establish the Coordinating Council, said, "I am monitoring the Council's deliberations closely since this is a test of innovative approaches under Superfund. The EPA has been very supportive in helping us find a consensus solution, so I would urge the Council members to keep up their collaborative effort, especially as we near its completion."

"I also want to applaud and commend Senator Leahy. Without his intervention at the beginning we never would have gotten on track, and without his continued vigilance we would not likely have reached this destination," DeVillars said. "We're very grateful for his substantial contributions."

(More)

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"This diverse group of businesses, environmentalists and government officials is working hard to reach consensus on the best clean-up plan. I am also pleased that the EPA has defined the boundaries of the site so that the less contaminated areas are considered 'brownfields," and can be redeveloped to benefit Burlington's economy as well as the environment," said Senator James Jeffords.

"I am pleased that the EPA and the community worked together to come up with a preliminary agreement that is cost effective and responsible. I hope that the Coordinating Council will continue to work toward a final plan which addresses contamination risk," said Rep. Bernie Sanders.

While pleased with the preliminary agreement, Lori Fisher of the Lake Champlain Committee emphasized that a final agreement requires consensus on several additional components of the proposed remedy. "We're optimistic that we'll reach agreement and we look forward to a final holistic remedy that addresses the on-site ecological risks and includes off-site work to prevent pollution and reduce toxic contamination."

The original plan presented by the EPA in 1992 called for construction of a \$50 million remedy at the site. Since the plan met strong public opposition, the EPA agreed to look at a new, less costly and less intrusive alternative.

The EPA and the Coordinating Council will formally issue a proposed plan that will go out for public review and comment later this year. During that time the EPA will hold an informational public meeting and a public hearing. In making the final decision on a remedy, comments taken from the community will be considered.

The points of the plan agreed to by the Council and for which the EPA will seek public comment include:

- * Institutional controls for the most contaminated parts of the site. The proposed controls would prohibit residential use, limit construction techniques for major excavations greater than five feet, establish procedures to protect workers working on utilities, and prevent land uses that could cause recontamination of the site.
- *Placement of a sand/silt cap on the contaminated canal and wetland sediments. The cap would isolate contamination from environmental receptors. This would be done underwater and with minimal disturbance of contaminated sediments. Underwater capping has been used at other Superfund sites with success.
- * Monitoring to ensure that contaminated groundwater does not reach Lake Champlain, and monitoring of sediment migration to Lake Champlain, and monitoring to ensure effectiveness of the cap.
- *Five year reviews to insure that the remedy remains protective.
- *The projected cost of the remedy is \$6-10 million.

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The Pine Street Barge Canal Site is an 80-acre site that was used as a coal gasification plant from 1908-1966. Plant waste waters and residual oil and wood chips saturated with organic compounds were discharged or disposed of in the Pine Street Barge Canal wetland.

During the 1960's and 1970's an oil-like material was detected seeping from the Pine Street Canal wetland, the Turning Basin and Maltex Pond. In testing the sediments, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) detected high levels of organic compound associated with coal tar at several locations on site. Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) and Volatile Organic Compounds were also detected in the groundwater and sediments. Concerned that the site posed a significant threat to Lake Champlain, a public drinking water source, the Vermont ANR referred the site to EPA.

The Pine Street Barge Canal Site was listed on the EPA's National Priorities List (NPL) in 1983.

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Environmental News

Contact: Alice Kaufman, EPA Press Office, 617,565,4592

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EPA APPROVES CLEANUP PLAN AS WORK MOVES FORWARD ON THE PINE STREET SITE

BOSTON-- The United States Environmental Protection Agency adopted today the \$4.38 million cleanup plan developed in collaboration with the Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council for the Pine Street Canal Superfund site in Burlington, Vermont. After being sent back to the drawing board in 1992, EPA sought advice and council from community residents to jointly redraw a plan for the barge site cleanup. EPA's New England Administrator John P. DeVillars said that the consensus building model used in Burlington stands as a national model for community-based decision-making. EPA's decision follows a 60-day public comment period.

"This works a victory for common sense and community involvement," said DeVillars. "The hard work of the Coordinating Council was fully endorsed by Burlington's citizens. It was a tough few years to get to this point and today we can applaud the success of the Council in representing the broader interests of the Burlington community. The public overwhelmingly endorsed the plan that EPA and the Council have hammered out over the last five years."

EPA's next step in the cleanup is to conclude negotiations with the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) and to enter into a legally binding agreement for the PRPs to design and perform the cleanup work. EPA anticipates that design of the cleanup will be completed in 1999, and construction of the underwater cap and other cleanup work will begin spring of 2000. In addition to the cleanup work, the PRPs agreed in May to spend up to an additional \$3 million for other environmental projects in the Burlington area.

Since being formed in 1993, the Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council, a group of local community members, environmental activists, PRPs and representatives from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and EPA have

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worked together to examine technical data, evaluate cleanup options and ultimately formulate a cleanup plan that meets regulatory requirements and is acceptable to the community.

"After years of hard work, it is extremely satisfying to see the progress made this year at Pine Street. The Coordinating Council has been instrumental in developing this cleanup plan and has shown the difference active community involvement can make in environmental decision making." said DeVillars. "Rather than dictate what is best for communities, the EPA will continue to partner with community groups like the Council to find long term solutions to local environmental problems."

"I am pleased that EPA has formally adopted the cleanup plan announced earlier this year for the Barge Canal," said U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. "This is an example of a federal agency listening to a community and demonstrating a willingness to work on an innovative solution. The resulting work product of the Coordinating Council is a Barge Canal plan and additional projects to benefit Lake Champlain with broad support."

Senator James M.. Jeffords commented that "the Coordinating Council has worked long and hard with the EPA during the last 6 years. They have produced a solid plan which provides a model of cooperation from which the rest of the country can learn."

"This is very good news for a community that has worked very hard to solve a difficult and frustrating problem," said Congressman Bernie Sanders. "I am particularly pleased that EPA has sought the active participation of Burlington residents, making this project an example of cooperative effort. I will continue to monitor the progress of the canal cleanup, and assist in any way I can to move this effort forward."

"This agreement proves that communities can play a crucial role in solving these difficult issues and that the federal government is willing to listen to the concerns of local residents. I applicate everyone who devoted countless hours of work toward moving this cleanup effort forward," said Governor Dean.

"I am extremely pleased with the cleanup plan arrived at by the Barge Canal Coordinating Committee. The Record of Decision (ROD) protects the environment, ensures public safety, and addresses the redevelopment potential of the Pine Street Corridor." said Mayor Peter Clavelle, "All this will be achieved at a reasonable costs, and was made possible only through diligent public process. Moreover, the ROD includes a site boundary definition that removes six important commercial properties in the study area. Once formally removed from the National Priorities List (NPL), these newly designated 'brownfield' properties will be redeveloped without the stigma of Superfund, turning liabilities into assets."

"The cleanup is the result of all parties setting aside differences and working together to create a common sense solution that is both environmentally protective and economically sound," said Lori Fisher, executive director of the Lake Champlain Committee. "We are especially pleased that the remedy includes funding for additional water quality restoration projects in the vicinity of the Superfund site."

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The Coordinating Council reached consensus on the proposed plan last May. The EPA presented the plan to the public for comment in June. In sharp contrast to the negative reaction EPA received on the first cleanup plan proposed in 1992, and withdrawn after a 6-month public comment period, public response to this new plan has been overwhelmingly favorable.

The remedy selected by EPA to address contamination at the Pine Street site minimizes risks to public health, aquatic life, and birds by reducing potential exposure to site contaminants. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and metals are found in the site's groundwater, soils and sediments.

The key components of the cleanup plan include:

- Placement of an underwater cap over the canal sediments that present the highest risk to the environment;
- Covering several wetland areas of contaminated soil and sediment near the canal;
- Setting in place land-use restrictions to prevent residential use, unsafe contact with contaminated soil below five feet, use of water for drinking, and future use of the site as a children's day care.
- Redirecting stormwater inflow and monitoring surface water, soils and sediment at the site.
- Long term monitoring of site conditions, including monitoring of the canal and Lake Champlain, groundwater and sediments.
- Reviews of the remedy every five years to ensure that it continues to protect human health and the environment.

The Pine Street Canal Site, a manufactured gas plant, operated from 1895 to 1966. The contamination at the site is from coal gasification wastes. In the 1970's, an oily substance was discovered in the wetlands adjacent to the barge canal. EPA investigations at the site conducted from 1989 to 1992 revealed extensive coal tar contamination in the soils and an oil like substance in the canal wetlands, turning basin and Maltex Pond. Additional studies were conducted from 1994-1998 under the auspices of the Coordinating Council. The Pine Street Superfund site was listed on the Superfund National Priorities List in 1983.

A copy of the cleanup plan will be available next week in Burlington at the Fletcher Library and the Baily/Howe Library .

VERMONT

Residents speak out on Barge Cana

By Sona lyengar Free Press Staff Writer

hazardous waste site on Lake Rod Rice is frustrated by the ongoing studies at a Burlington Champlain.

nearly 60 years.

"I just hate to see money wasted in this manner," said Rice, who lives in the South End, where the site is located.

He was one of about 40 to Superfund site. An estimated attend an informational meeting Fuesday at Burlington City Hall on the Pine Street Barge Canal

Agency's proposed \$50

tection

The U.S. Environmental Promillion cleanup plan, which included building a landfill on the

dents to devise a cleanup plan.

600,000 cubic yards of soil were contaminated there by wastes

and groundwater contamination and storm run-off at the Barge Canal started a month late in entific studies on air quality, soil September. The Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council sponsored from a coal-gasification plant for Tuesday's meeting, which focused on the Barge Canal's history, pro-posed studies and residents' con-

ganisms that break down contamination are present; if heavy Issues to be studied include whether any contamination is reaching Lake Champlain; if or-

> cerns. The council is a first-inthe-nation effort that allows resi-

site, was withdrawn after resi-storms affect the surface water dents objected.

An estimated \$800,000 of sci-effect upon fish, the ecosystem entific studies on air quality, soil and human health.

"The purpose for these stud-ies is to provide the basis for us to come to a solution for this president of The Johnson Co., site," said Chris Crandell, consultants doing the tests.

Council members said they may have a remedial solution in one to three years.